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In Huge Protest, Romanians Rail Against Do-Over Election Targeting Populist NATO Skeptic

BY TYLER DURDEN

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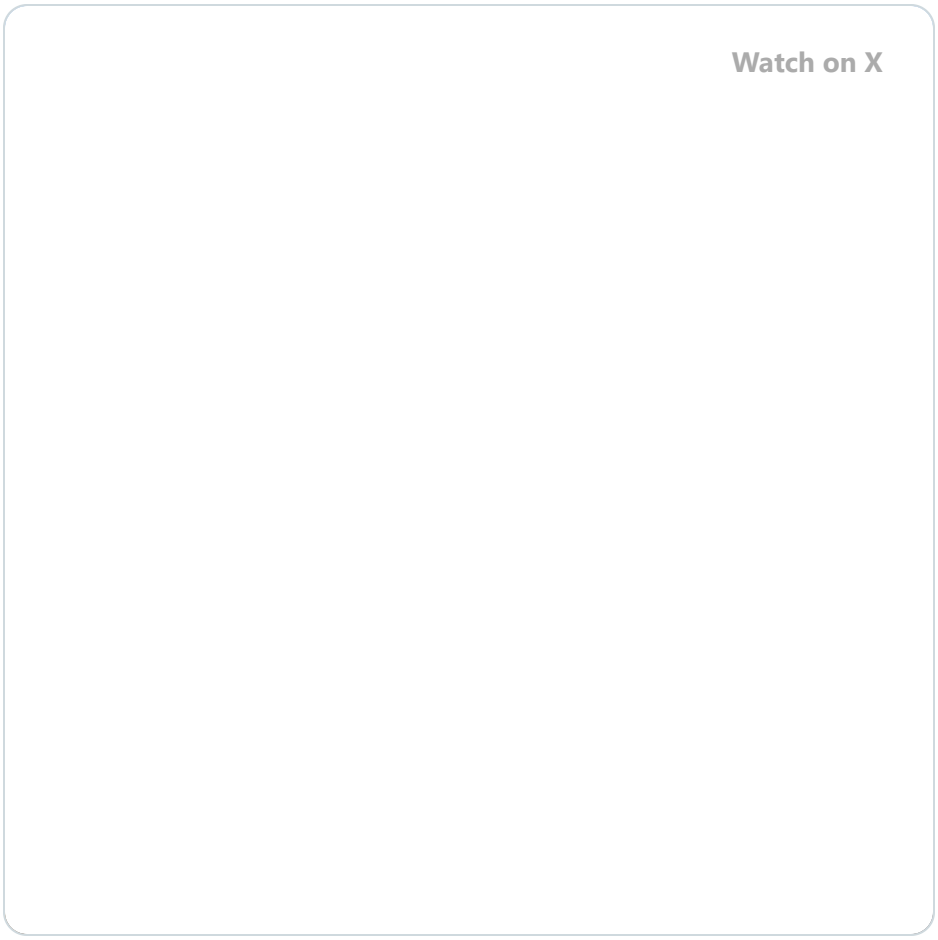
Upwards of 100,000 Romanians of various political stripes took to the streets on Sunday to express outrage over the voiding of a presidential election that seemed poised to put a NATO and Ukraine War skeptic in power. George Simion, leader of the right-wing Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, summed up the intent of the demonstrations his party organized:

> *"We are protesting against the coup d'état that took place on Dec. 6. **We are sorry to discover so late that we were living in a lie and that we were led by people who claimed to be democrats**, but are not at all. We demand a return to democracy through the resumption of elections, starting with the second round."*

Bucharest protesting against the decision to cancel the elections and in support of Georgescu

Man tries to find the end of the protest, gives up after he keeps running into masses of people



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In November, Romania held the first balloting in its two-round election. It resulted in Europe's latest instance in which a populist, nationalist, right-wing candidate posted a result that far exceeded what polls indicated he was capable of. In a 13-contender field, that candidate, **Calin Georgescu**, led the pack with 23%, setting him up to advance to the second and final round against reformist Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union party.

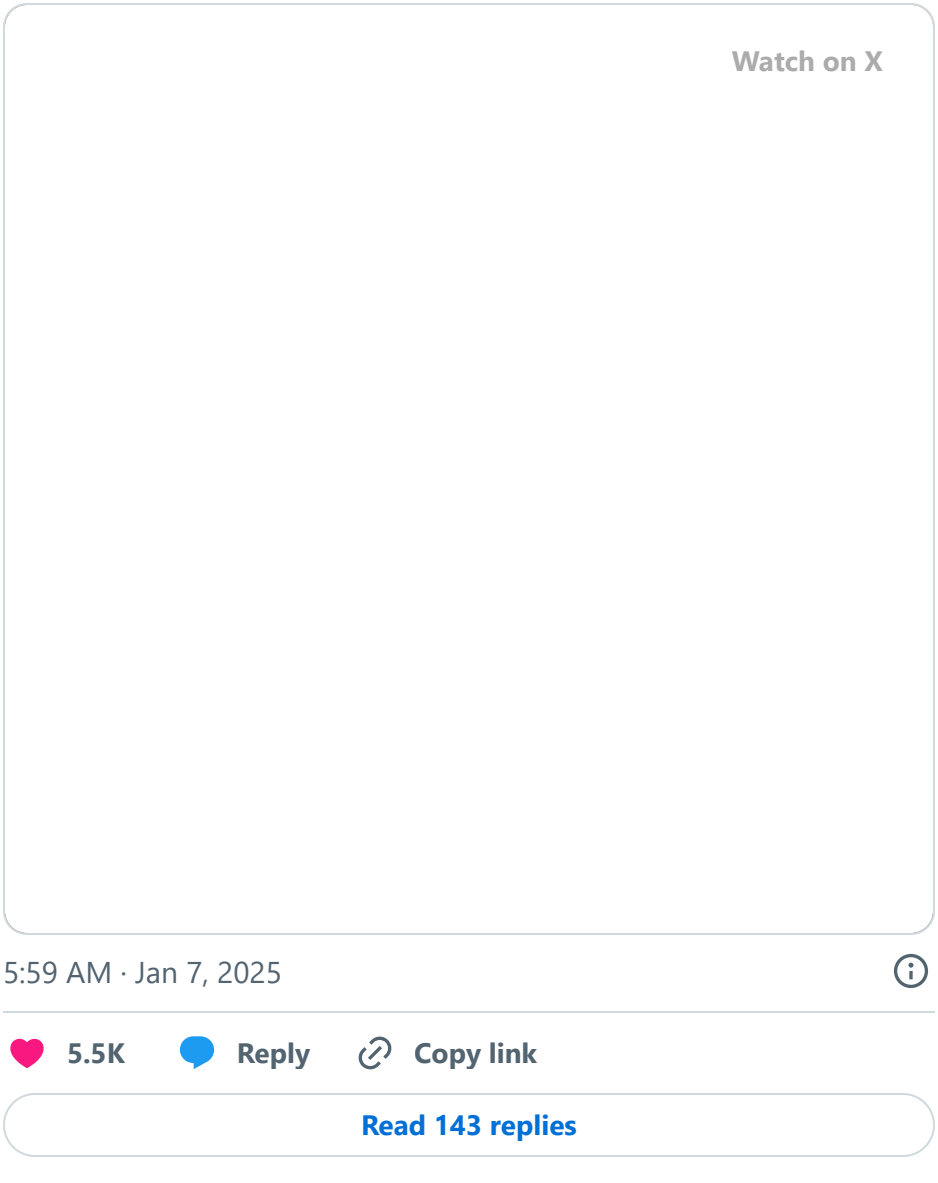
However, just two days before that second round was to take place on Dec. 8, Romania's constitutional court annulled the election, and ordered a complete do-over of both rounds. Their justification: **Supposed Russian meddling** manifested in manipulated votes, campaign irregularities and secret spending. The ruling came after incumbent President Klaus Iohannis reportedly shared intelligence claiming Russia organized thousands of social media accounts to boost Georgescu's campaign.

"You petty politicians, with your ungrateful and immature games, you won't even know what hit you in this global storm," said Georgescue in a social media post in which he promoted the protest and compared Romanian leaders and judges with former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who's on trial on corruption charges. "You are so small that you aren't even able to understand anything. **Nothing you do will make a difference anymore. The inevitable, is inevitable."**

January 10 in front of the Constitutional Court of Romania, the court which cancelled the elections:

Raise your flags, raise your heads and raise your hearts.

We are the people, with God forward.

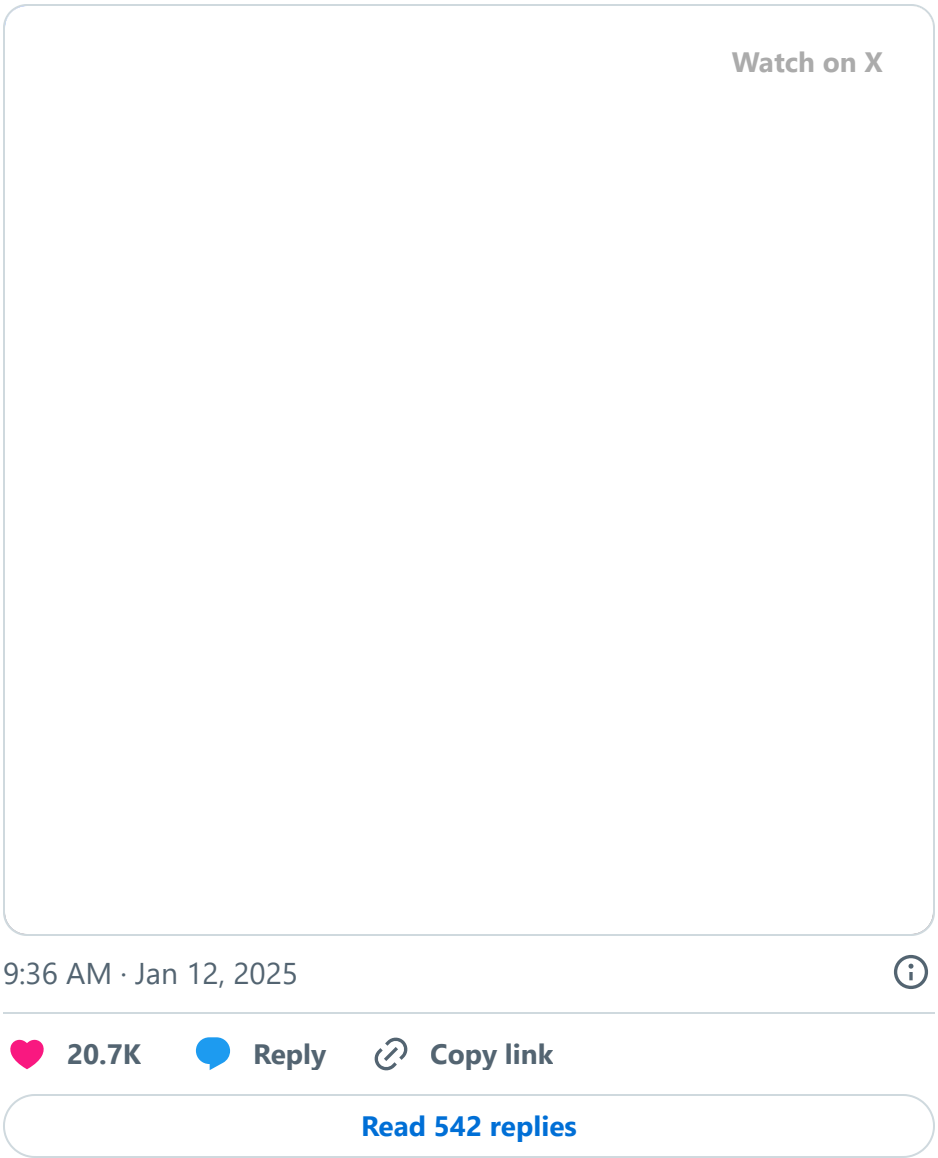


On Sunday, crowds -- estimated in size from tens of thousands to more than 100,000 -- marched through the streets of Bucharest, with *Reuters* reporting that **many left-wingers joined the protest.** The slogans on their signs included "We Want Free Elections," "Bring Back The Second Round," "Freedom," and "Democracy Is Not Optional." In a country that is among the most religiously observant in Europe, many

The mainstream media right now is one of the most hated institutions in Romania

For 35 years they have lied to us without shame and worked against the interests of the Romanian people

Journalists are being booed at the protest in Romania, where more than 100,000 are attending



Social media was the principal catalyst of 62-year-old Georgescu's success. He didn't run as a member of any political party, but his TikTok account racked up 1.6 million likes for content showing him

Iohannis' term was supposed to end on Dec. 21, but he's now slated to remain in power until the do-over election is complete. The dates are not yet official, but, last week, leaders of the ruling coalition government said they'd agreed on holding the two rounds on May 4 and May 18.

Georgescu's views are anathema to the European establishment. He's **pledged to restore Romanian sovereignty and put an end to what he characterizes as subservience to NATO and the EU.** He has taken a hard line against the presence of NATO's missile defense system that's based in Deveselu, southern Romania, calling it a "shame of diplomacy" that is more confrontational than peace-promoting.

Romania shares a 400-mile border with Ukraine and hosts a NATO missile defense system in the country's south (via Britannica)

decreasing the country's reliance on imports.

However, now it is the sovereignty of the Romanian people themselves that is in peril. As a flag-wrapped economist named Cornelia told *Reuters* on Sunday: **"At this rate we won't be voting anymore, they will impose a leader like in the old days."**

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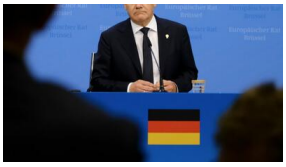

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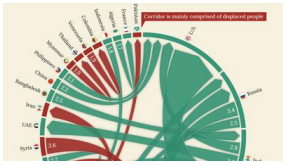

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